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The Christian Ethic in the Individual,
the Family, and the State

THE BECKLY SOCIAL SERVICE LECTURE

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The Christian Ethic
in
the Individual, the Family,
and the State

The Social Service Lecture, 1929

By W. B. SELBIE, D.D.

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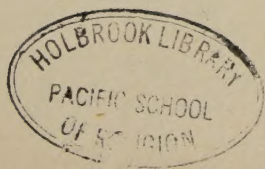
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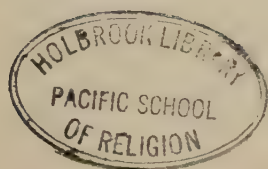
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FOREWORD :
RELIGION AND ETHICS

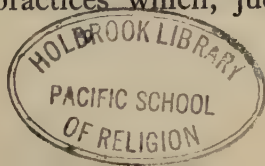


FOREWORD :

RELIGION AND ETHICS

THE relation between religion and morals has long been a vexed question, and one on which men are no nearer agreement to-day than ever. Even those who admit that religion has to do with values rather than facts differ among themselves as to the exact nature of the values in question, though it is obvious that on their nature the whole subject depends. This is a caution that must always be borne in mind in discussing the development either of religion or of moral standards. It is often argued, for example, that many primitive religions are non-moral, if not actually immoral ; that the great advance marked by the Jewish religion was due to a process of moralization under the Law and the Prophets ; or that Christianity must be differentiated from all other religions by its obviously higher and even unique ethic. One of the most recent definitions of religion is ' a moral trust in reality.'

Now, we need not hesitate to admit that religion in the past has often given its sanction to, if it has not originated, practices which, judged by our



present standards, are profoundly immoral, e.g. cannibalism, suttee, and the widespread custom of temple prostitution. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that many students of the subject should have come to the conclusion that religion is *per se* at least a-moral, and that the importation into religious cults and systems of moral ideas is of the nature of an intrusion. This conclusion, however, is the outcome of the fundamental error of judging the morality of primitive peoples by the standards of our time, rather than by those of their own. Modern students of primitive religion fully recognize the fact that it gives both expression and sanction to the highest values which primitive man knows, and also puts upon him certain restraints and obligations which he voluntarily accepts for the sake of certain social ends. Thus, totemism may be regarded as a social and moral force as well as a religious system, and we may agree with Professor McDougall that if 'the essence of moral conduct is the performance of social duty . . . as opposed to the mere following of the promptings of egoistic impulses,' then we must admit that religion and morality have been, from the first, intimately related and bound up together. Religion has had a powerful influence both in creating and developing certain moral values, and in providing the impulse which has

made them binding. If it is true that 'there is nothing of which man is more certain than of his primary moral values,' it is also true that for the maintenance of these values he depends, not merely on their intrinsic qualities, but on the urges and compulsions of his own higher nature, which point him beyond himself. It is true that the history of morals is closely bound up with the course of man's development as a social being. It contains many elements, the moral value of which, according to our later standards, is nil. The same is true, as we have already seen, of religion. Many primitive religious practices have little or nothing in them that we can regard as distinctively religious. But they are none the worse for that, if we judge them by the end they are intended to serve. In any developmental process that is the only right method ; our estimate of a child is based on the fact that it is a potential man or woman. So of great movements and systems whether of religion or morals. We only judge them rightly as we consider, not their lowly origins, but their great issues, and the ends they serve. Apart from any question of revelation, religion and morals both originate in those aspects and offices of our human nature which are distinctively human and differentiate us from the animal. They grow with our growth, and in

their ultimate form stand or fall by their own worth and efficacy, unaffected by their mean beginnings or by any of those baser elements which have gone to their making.

At the same time, we cannot leave out of account the objective element. That men have found in duty 'the stern daughter of the voice of God,' and that they have been conscious of a 'Thus saith the Lord' as the motive power behind the ordinances of religion, is an acknowledged fact. That this has stood for something more than mere imagination or auto-suggestion may be assumed from its universality, its persistence, and its practical issues. No conception of God will retain its hold over the human mind, or continue to influence the actions of men for good, after it has been discovered to be illusory. The mere suspicion that religion may be an illusion, which is so carefully fostered by certain modern psychologists,¹ is enough to account for the slackening of religious interest and enthusiasm which is so marked a feature of our time. And the same suspicion is slowly but surely undermining the foundation of morals. Once morals are cut loose from religion, and from the powerful sanctions which religion alone can supply, we are driven

¹ Cf. *The Future of an Illusion*, by Sigmund Freud (Hogarth Press).

back on weaker lines of support that are very difficult to defend. As Professor Baillie says, ' Moral values have come to man from the beginning in a religious setting . . . naturalism has never yet succeeded in making it credible to us that our values can continue to live and breathe when they have been robbed of their ancestral faith in their own cosmic significance. We can do without the reward, we can do without the glory, perhaps we can do without the spur and the crutch, but we cannot do without the assurance that the struggle in which we are engaged is a real fight, and a fight that counts. To renounce that faith is no true heroism, but only foolish heroics ; no noble self-renunciation, but only disloyalty to the deepest thing in our souls and a selling of our most sacred birthright.'¹

Modern writers like Professors Troeltsch and Otto lay stress on the non-rational character of the religious *a priori*, and find in it something altogether *sui generis*. In its inception, they argue, religion is wholly unethical, though in the course of its development it becomes both rationalized and moralized. This, again, is a view of religion which cannot be easily reconciled with the facts. It is true that there is in all religion this deep unanalysable element which Otto calls

¹ *The Interpretation of Religion*, p. 357.

the numinous ; but it is not non-rational in the sense of being wholly beyond comprehension and definition. It belongs to our human nature, as such, and finds appropriate expression for itself in those primitive social and ethical forms thrown out in the course of man's reaction to his universe. If we admit, as these writers do, a progressive moralization of religion, it is impossible to keep this in a water-tight compartment by itself and divorce it wholly from the development of the numinous element. The two go hand in hand, and are bound up with each other. Thus all attempts to keep religion and morality rigidly apart break down on the facts of human experience, and create difficulties which ' can only be solved by letting go altogether the radical distinction between the numinous and the ethical, and allowing to our knowledge of good and evil an *entrée* into the very holy of holies of our religious faith.'¹

We are here confronted with a very practical problem, viz. that of relating religion and morals in such a way as to make each a help-meet to the other. No religion has any permanent value that does not minister to man's moral progress. No system of morals will retain its authority, and guide conduct, apart from the sanctions which religion alone can supply. It is true that man's

¹ Baillie. Op. cit., p. 254.

moral judgements claim a certain objective validity in themselves. Things are right or wrong, or are conceived to be so, apart from any individual judgements or preferences. It is not a matter of emotion or taste, but of a moral sense or reason, which lays down certain propositions as true and binding for all people at all times. The question as to how these moral judgements arise does not affect their validity. As Dr. Rashdall has pointed out, 'The existence and validity of an objective morality is no more affected by its gradual development, or by the fact that infants and very low savages may not possess the notion at all, than the validity of mathematical axioms is affected by the fact—if it be a fact—that some savages cannot count more than ten, or that mathematically deficient minds—sometimes very brilliant minds in other ways—cannot follow the simplest geometrical reasoning.'¹ At the same time, we may fully admit that religion can play a great part in purifying moral ideals and strengthening moral obligations. In the same way, the effort to obey the moral law, whatever its sanctions, is a well-recognized means of intensifying religious feeling and insight. In a well-known sermon, Robertson of Brighton argues that 'obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge.' He says:

¹ *Conscience and Christ*, p. 12.

‘ Act, be merciful and gentle and honest : force yourself to abound in little services : try to do good to others : be true to the duty that you know. That must be right, whatever else is uncertain. And by all the laws of the human heart, by the word of God you shall not be left to doubt. Do that much of the will of God which is plain to you and “ you shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” ’

This raises the whole question of moral authority. There is widespread agreement that men have a moral consciousness, or power of determining right and wrong, which in the last resort is binding, and a real guide to conduct. But, as we have already seen, this faculty, like all others, is subject to development, and is itself the resultant of many competing forces. It involves the consciousness of certain ends and of certain values. These, again, are not merely emotional, but depend on rational processes which have to be tested by rational means. It is ultimately a matter of education, and, in the moral education both of the individual and of the race, religion has had its part to play. No doubt it has sometimes had the effect of creating artificial standards of good and evil which have had very little ethical significance, and are incapable of producing ethical results. Religion has created a whole catalogue

of ceremonial and ritual sins and virtues which have little or nothing to do with right and wrong in human relations. It is quite possible to be very scrupulous about such things, and to be anything but morally sound—to tithe mint, anise, and cummin, and to neglect the weightier matters of the law, goodness, mercy, and truth. It is this, no doubt, which has led to that sharp distinction between religion and morals which has so many advocates to-day. It rests on a one-sided interpretation of religion as cultus, dogma, and the like. On the other hand, once we recognize that religion is life and power, its ethical content and relations become manifest. It serves at once to interpret and enhance all human values. It exalts man's ideals, and fills them with a new and larger content. It clarifies conscience, lends it a new assurance, and gives point, direction, and power to the findings and impulses of natural morality. It may be true that the spheres of religion and morality are separate. They move in different orbits, but they constantly touch, and even overlap. In the development of human character and the ordering of human relations, each is necessary to the other. Morality without religion is apt to degenerate into dry legalism and formality—a code of conduct lacking incentive and ideals. Religion without morality is even worse—mere

sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. When Matthew Arnold defined religion as 'morality touched with emotion,' he was at least enunciating a half-truth. Without the emotional impulse and idealism which religion can give, morality will always be barren. It is a great thing when a man does his duty simply because it is his duty—the right thing to do. But when he is able to add to this that he is also doing the will of God, there is a warmth and life and an assurance of power about his conduct which it will otherwise lack. So, too, the higher a man's conception of God and of religious values, the higher will be his standard of conduct and the greater his incentive to attain it. Every student of religion knows that the character of a people closely resembles the character of its God or gods. Cruel and immoral deities have cruel and immoral worshippers. On the other hand, men make gods in their own image, and their moral defects easily reproduce themselves in their divinities. It is not always possible to say which comes first—the God who makes the people or the people who make the God. But it is possible to understand how changes in the religious outlook may be at once brought about by, and produce, an effect upon the moral ideal. The Greek philosophers who condemned the immoralities of the Greek gods, and the Hebrew

prophets who stood for the holiness and righteousness of Yahweh against the corruptions of Baalism, were alike affected by a higher conception of the divine, and so of ethics, than that of their contemporaries. Such higher vision has been at the root of all religious progress, and culminates in the arresting command, 'Be ye perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.'

We may, therefore, welcome the conclusion to which Mr. C. E. M. Joad comes in his lively little work, *Thrasymachus, or the Future of Morals*: 'In a new and positive morality in which men can believe lies the hope for the world: yet such a morality cannot come without a revival of religion. Religion, and religion alone, gives the driving force which impels men to change things, and, until a religious attitude to the world again becomes part of man's common heritage, all the apparent changes in morality, of which different ages and countries are the witnesses, will fail to disguise the fundamental fact that there is no morality to change.'¹

¹ p. 92.

I

THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC AND THE
INDIVIDUAL

I

THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC AND THE INDIVIDUAL

THE question as to the meaning and scope of the Christian ethic, and its applicability to modern conditions, is one that is beset with difficulty. Though a vast amount of ink has been spilt, there is no really good book on the subject—certainly no dispassionate scholarly treatise that can be recommended as a text-book to students. Thus it is as hard to find a coherent answer to the query, What is the Christian ethic? as it is to find an answer to the much larger and more fundamental question, What is Christianity? Men always tend to approach the whole subject from the standpoint of their particular ecclesiastical or doctrinal position, and their treatment of it varies accordingly. There are still to be found those to whom the moral aspect of Christianity is almost a negligible quantity, who stress the antithesis between faith and works and regard doing as a deadly thing, and whose whole attitude is that of a tacit and unconscious antinomianism. At the other extreme are those who regard Christianity

simply as a new legal code, and who demand that society be at once reconstructed on the basis of it, without even pausing to ask where the driving force is to come from which would make such a revolution possible. The fact is that Christianity is, in essence, no more an ethical system than a creed. Both of these may be involved in it or derived from it. But it is itself more and greater than either of them, and the part they play in it respectively can only be understood in relation to the whole. Christianity is a life, and if we accept for a moment Harnack's definition of it as 'eternal life in the midst of time by the strength and under the eyes of God,' we can hardly escape the conclusion that such a life will at once require and shape its own moral standards. When we add to this the fact that the source and goal of Christian conduct is a personal life, the supreme embodiment of which is in Jesus Christ, we discover that in virtue of which Christianity is able to transcend the ancient conflict between religion and morals, and reach something in the nature of a synthesis. In any case, it is well to realize at the outset that in the ethics of Christianity we are concerned, not with bloodless legal categories, but with living personal issues. That, no doubt, makes the subject infinitely more attractive and vital, if less amenable to academic logical treatment. It has also the

further advantage of removing it at once from the sphere of a merely interim ethic, and opening up its wider and even universal implications. It becomes easy to relate it to a type of religion which consists largely in love to God and one's neighbour, and finds expression in faith or personal trust in a living God.

On these and other grounds, therefore, it must be evident from the first that no hard and fast line of demarcation can be drawn between Christian ethics and Christian theology. Both alike run back into the teaching, work, and person of Jesus Christ. The new interpretation which He put upon the nature of God and His relations with men involved a new valuation of humanity, and a new standard of human conduct and obligation.¹ It may be true, as Matthew Arnold tells us, that 'conduct is three-fourths of life,' but in the other fourth, whatever it is, we have to look for that which colours and determines conduct. That which constitutes Christian conduct is not merely the interpretation of life and duty in terms of the will of God as revealed in the teaching and example of Jesus, but the discovery of sanctions and powers made available for men through their personal relation to this same Jesus. In other

¹ There is force in the remark of Deissmann that 'the originality of Jesus lies in His whole personality.'

words, the Christian ethic includes, not only the statement, 'This is the way ; walk ye in it,' but also the impartation of 'power to become' in a form available for all who need it. In this respect as well as in its ideal content the Christian system of morals stands distinguished from all others.

When, however, we speak of Christian morals, we must clearly understand that we are not confined to the teaching of Jesus as contained in the Synoptic Gospels. There, no doubt, we have the source or seed-bed of the whole system of Christian ethics as afterwards developed. The teaching of Jesus was neither systematic nor final in form. It involved implications which it was left to others to draw. Herein lies its greatness—that it dealt with first principles in such a way as made them easily adaptable to new circumstances as they might arise. There is a note of universality about it all, a statement of root principles which have in them an almost infinite power of expansion. Thus Professor Percy Gardner is a little too sweeping when he says, 'If we regard the teaching of Christianity as confined to the preaching of the Founder, we shall have to confess that by far the greater part of modern social and industrial life stands outside it. We shall try in vain to find in it directions for carrying on professions or trades ; for the bringing up of children

and education of the young, the care of the old.'¹ Exactly ; but we ought not to expect to find anything of the sort. Professor Gardner goes on to show how St. Paul, working on the principles of Jesus, prescribes the duties of Christians in certain social, family, and industrial relations. He has been followed by many others who have applied these same principles to the circumstances and needs of their own day, and the process is one that still requires to be carried out. But in attempting to do so we shall be well advised to take into account, not merely the original teaching of the Master, but those applications and adaptations of it which have dominated Christian life and determined Christian character and action through the ages. It is indeed fortunate that Jesus Himself attempted so little in the way of detailed application or prescription. Had He done so, and given to the world a meticulous ethical code, He would have defeated His own object, and hung a millstone round the neck of Christendom for all time. Instead, He laid down certain principles the mere statement of which issues a challenge to the moral consciousness of mankind. It is this challenge which we must attempt to take up.

In the ethical teaching of Jesus there are at last three features which put it in a category by

¹ *Evolution in Christian Ethics*, p. 120.

itself, and must not be overlooked in any attempt to apply it under modern conditions. First is the fact that, in contrast to the average Jewish teaching of His time, He drew a clear distinction between the moral and the ceremonial in human obligation. The Pharisaism that could be very scrupulous about the smallest matters of ceremonial, and yet 'devour widows' houses' was utterly alien to His spirit, however justifiable it may have been from the point of view of religious particularism. So to keep the Sabbath in such fashion as to contravene the dictates of human kindness was as bad as not keeping it at all. Works of charity and mercy must not be neglected in the interests of any ceremonial or of any religious prejudice. For in the mind of Jesus there was evidently a moral standard that was not that of His day. This explains His apparent laxity in regard to certain sensual sins, and His severe condemnation of sins like those of pride and selfishness, which we often count the less heinous. He seems to have looked at the whole moral situation from a standpoint and with an insight that were *sui generis*, and in this respect His followers have certainly come far short both of His spirit and His ideals.

The second point to be emphasized is the more familiar one of the inwardness of the moral teaching of Jesus. He taught that God has regard,

not so much to the outward act, as to the motive and intention from which it springs. It is not only murder that must be condemned, but anger ; not adultery, but lust ; not theft, but covetousness. This is not to say that anger is as bad as murder, for it obviously is not, but it does warn us that things are not always what they seem. Good actions may be vitiated by bad motives, and sin may be made less sinful by the state of mind from which it arises. Modern psychology, with its emphasis on unconscious motivation, has greatly complicated the problem, and has rendered the warning of Jesus not less, but more, necessary than ever.

Thirdly, there is in the moral standards of Jesus a warm humanity, and therefore a leniency which distinguishes Him from all other ethical teachers. If the story of the woman taken in adultery may be accepted as authentic, it illustrates this spirit most clearly. But, quite apart from this single incident, the attitude of Jesus to the moral delinquents (publicans, sinners, lost) of His day was unique. The standards by which He judged them were quite different from those which the conventions of the time and country allowed. He approached the whole moral situation in a more human and sympathetic spirit, and was therefore able to make allowances which would be quite

impossible under the strict letter of the law. Without going so far as to accept the dictum, 'Tout comprendre est tout pardonner,' we may certainly say that the teaching and example of Jesus fully justify us in taking all extenuating circumstances into consideration in forming our moral judgements. On the basis of a broad human understanding and sympathy men are likely to be more justly treated than by the enforcement of the strict letter of the law. The point is fundamental to any interpretation or application of the Christian ethic, and serves again to emphasize and enforce its challenging appeal.

It has been said, 'If Christianity were ethics, then Socrates is the Saviour.' That may be perfectly true, but it is also true that Christianity has an ethic whose *differentia* is that it is not imposed on men as an external legal system, but arises naturally from the new interpretation of human nature involved in the teaching of Jesus. The last thing that Jesus sought to do was to become a moral lawgiver or social and political leader. If the story of His temptation means anything, it is that He rejected all claims to such leadership in favour of a task far deeper and more difficult, viz. the transfiguration of all human values in the light of a new revelation of God and of His attitude to men. It was not that He was

not concerned with human life in all its ramifications. Nothing human was alien to Him, but He preferred to work from the centre rather than from the circumference. So He bade men seek first the Kingdom of God, and then the other things would fall into place. His task was the other worldly one of setting men right with God in the central citadel of their souls, and He knew that when that was done a new moral and social order would follow. His teaching was leaven cast into the lump, and He left it to do its transforming work. He had a saving sense of humour, which prevented Him from turning principles into precepts—an example which Christians have not always followed.

The first and most vitalizing aspect of the theology of Jesus, if we may so call it, was its reaction on man's valuation of himself as an individual in the sight of God. If God is the Father of all men, and loves them unto the uttermost, then it follows that all men alike have an intrinsic value in God's sight. He cares for them all simply because they are all His children, and not in virtue of their rank, status, colour, culture, or nationality. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the effect which this message produced in the early days of the Christian era. Among the depressed classes the Christian gospel wrought

like new wine, because it gave to manhood and womanhood, as such, a value and a dignity and a hope unknown before. It is hardly too much to say that Jesus first taught the world the meaning of personality as a sacred and inviolable thing, precious to God and therefore precious in itself. There was nothing in Him of that scornful and superior attitude towards the masses which was characteristic of the most humane thinkers, both among Greeks, Romans, and Jews.¹ Indeed, the very term 'masses' is alien to the thought of Jesus. He had compassion on the multitudes, it is true, but His concern was with the individuals among them as individuals, because He held every one of them to be a potential child of God. So, too, in His reckoning there was neither male nor female. The position of women even in the most cultured circles of the then civilized world was one of decided inferiority and subordination. By His new doctrine of human values, as well as by His personal treatment of women, Jesus raised their status from that of things to that of persons, and made it for ever impossible to treat them as mere playthings and appendages of men. It has taken even the Christian Church a long time to live up to this doctrine and to carry it out in practice, and, in some respects, it has lagged

¹ 'The people which knoweth not the law are accursed.'

behind the State in its attitude. For example, the opening of the ministry to women is in some quarters of the Church frowned upon, and in others bitterly opposed, and that mainly on grounds which virtually deny to women the status freely accorded to them by Jesus. That women have certain gifts and qualifications which pre-eminently fit them for 'this ministry,' in some of its most important aspects, the whole history of the Church and the mission field abundantly proves. That they have both the right and the power to stand alongside of men in industry, commerce, politics, and the professions is now everywhere recognized. To debar them, then, from the ministry of the Church can only be justified on an estimate of their status and capacities which is pagan rather than Christian, and which ignores the plain teaching of Jesus on the subject.

The social implications of this new doctrine of human values are very far reaching. It was something much more searching than a mere doctrinaire assertion of human equality, and from the earliest days it worked like a ferment in the new society and in the world at large. The assumption that even a slave could be a Christian and a child of God slowly but surely undermined slavery as an institution, and made its abolition only a matter of

time. So any industrial system which regards men and women as wage slaves, hands, or tools, stands condemned, and is quite incompatible with any Christian view of human relations. The same is true of all those social and political movements which exist to further the interests of one class or section of the community as over against the rest. The inevitable result is that the individual is lost in the crowd, and his interest and advancement are regarded as secondary to those of the body to which he belongs. In any society organized on the old acquisitive or competitive basis the individual naturally suffers. In such a social order it is inevitable that the strong should exploit the weak, and if ever society is reorganized on a Christian basis it will involve a revolutionary change in the valuation of the individual and of his function in the body politic. It is not that the Christian Church has failed in the past to recognize the value of the individual in the sight of God, or has ceased to preach the need for individual salvation. But it has never carried this doctrine to its logical conclusion in a social ethic. The Catholic Churches have been too oligarchic in their temper, and too closely allied with a half-pagan aristocracy, while the Free Churches have never yet fulfilled the promise implicit in their more democratic constitution. As Mr. R. H.

Tawney has said, 'They drew their support largely from the earnest and sober piety of the trading and commercial classes. Individualist in their faith, they were individualist in their interpretation of social morality. Insisting that the essence of religion was the contact of the individual soul with its Maker, they regarded the social order and its consequences, not as the instruments through which grace is mediated, or as steps in the painful process by which the soul climbs to a fuller vision, but as something external, alien, and irrelevant—something at best indifferent to personal salvation, and at worst the sphere of the letter which killeth and of the reliance on works which ensnares the spirit into the slumber of death.'¹ Now we need not hesitate to admit the stark individualism of much of the teaching of Jesus, and of the preaching of His gospel in later times. To stress the value of human personality was as needful as it was new in the beginning of the Christian era. And it is needful still. It is the beginning of all social reform. 'The soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul.' Why should men resent degrading conditions and narrow opportunities if there is not that in them which makes these things an outrage on their humanity? Once

¹ *The Acquisitive Society*, p. 229.

establish in the individual a sense of his true worth to God and to his fellows and you arouse a divine discontent with everything that cramps and hampers the full development of his powers. Of all the mistakes which the opponents of religion have made, the most short-sighted and ridiculous is their characterization of religion as dope. Christianity, at any rate so far from drugging man's sensibilities or quenching his spirit, has as its object the very opposite. In presenting him to himself as a child of God it stirs him to action, and even to strife. It justifies him in taking as his motto, 'Noblesse oblige,' and in refusing to acquiesce complacently in things as they are, so long as men and women made in the image of God have to live under conditions which degrade them to the level of brutes. It is not without significance that the first strivings of revolt against industrial oppression and social injustice were felt in those 'little Bethels' where simple men and women learned of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. They were only too familiar with the type of religion suggested by the words, 'God bless the squire and his relations, and keep us in our proper stations,' and they reacted violently against it. The teaching of Christianity as to the equality of all men in the sight of God, and the obligation to love one's neighbour as

oneself, opened out to them a new world, and enabled them to avoid the consequences of the rather one-sided individualism of their theology.

At the same time, the fact must not be overlooked that Christian individualism, rightly understood, carries with it definite social consequences. The gospel of individual salvation is not the selfish thing it often seems. Salvation is not merely negative, but positive ; not merely deliverance from evil and its consequences, but the introduction to a new life of holiness, service, and self-sacrifice. Salvation for the individual means a great deal more than 'safety first.' It is risk, adventure, suffering for the sake of others. Christian holiness is no mere cloistered and academic virtue, but a spiritual achievement, by which a man's character is sharpened and disciplined for effective witness and service among his fellows. It is an acknowledged fact that, when a man becomes a Christian, not only is his own nature changed, but his relations with his world take on new forms. The sense of what he is worth to God leads him through self-knowledge to self-reverence and self-control. As in the dawn of love, so in the dawn of religion, the world around takes on new hues. The trees and fields are greener and the sky more blue, and men and women become more interesting and more worth

while. There is an intensification of the gregarious instinct, and a new readiness to spend and be spent for others. The quickening of conscience enhances the sense of social responsibility, and makes social service no longer a duty, but a delight. The rise of a new and keener self-consciousness means a new appreciation of human values, an enhanced sensitiveness to the needs of other men and women, and a sacrificial devotion to their service. The Christian motive or sanction here is more powerful than any other. With many people the impulse to social service is largely material, and not without a basis in self-interest, and is often content with achieving an improvement in the outer conditions of life. The Christian ethic, and the social enthusiasm which is its outcome, rest, on the other hand, on the belief in the essential spirituality of man and his native capacity for God. The result is a permanent driving force which makes of its idealism a practical working programme. It is, however, when we come to apply this Christian valuation of man on an international scale that the need for it is seen to be paramount, and the difficulties involved in it become acute. Race, class, and colour prejudices have deep roots, and die very hard. Conditions in countries like South Africa and the southern States of America, where the colour bar

reigns even in Christian Churches, reveal an almost insoluble problem. We are persuaded that the only possible solution lies in recognizing to the full the Christian estimate of man, and allowing it in the long run to shape both policy and conduct.

Something has been said already of the close relation which exists, and always must exist, between Christian ethics and Christian theology. Man's relations with God depend upon his idea of God, and the Christian conception of God is in the long run regulative of Christian life and conduct. It is an old saying, 'Like God, like people.' So within Christianity the ethical standard and atmosphere of those who believe in the Calvinistic God of the divine decrees and predestination is very different from that of the Roman Catholic who approaches his God through the Virgin Mary and the saints. It may be that the great need of the moment is for the Church to christianize its theology and return to a conception of God more after the mind of Christ and less after the mind of patristic or mediaeval theologians. But this will never be possible as a mere matter of intellectual speculation. One of the deepest sayings attributed to Jesus Christ is, 'He that willeth to do His will shall know of the teaching.' Obedience is the organ of spiritual

knowledge, and without submission to the will of God there can be no understanding of His ways. Thus the appeal of God to man as set forth in the teaching of Jesus is for an unquestioning obedience and faith. He bade men have faith in God and be anxious for nothing. This means on man's side a freedom from care and worry, a calm and poise that makes a man master of himself and of circumstances. To the Christian who really trusts in God, and to whom God is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, his faith stands for righteousness in the sense that it stimulates him to do God's will, and lifts him far above the distractions and difficulties of this present world. It is this dominant faith in God that makes it possible for a Christian to be in the world but not of it, to play his part fully in this life and yet remain a dedicated spirit. It is this, too, which gives to his whole outlook upon life that confidence and sincerity which are so characteristically Christian, and count for so much in an age when failure of nerve is so common a symptom. We have perhaps yet to realize how large a part the lack of religious assurance plays in producing neurotic conditions, and how much Christianity can contribute in delivering men from nervous obsessions and fears.

On the positive aspects of Christian character not much need be said. The ideal held up before

us in the teaching of Jesus is recognizable and distinctive. It stands in sharp contrast to the high-minded aloofness of Greek moralists on the one hand and the pushful self-assertiveness of modern commercialism on the other. Nietzsche's characterization of it as a slave morality is far from being the whole truth, but it does exalt some of the minor and less aggressive virtues at the expense of those of a more demonstrative kind. Humility, patience, and self-sacrifice count as much as active benevolence. The inner mind and disposition are all-important. Hunger and thirst after righteousness are better than the assurance of it, which often means self-righteousness. This disposition follows quite naturally on the Christian idea of man's relation to God and to his fellows. Faith involves dependence, and dependence humility, and service thus becomes a matter of course. The Christian character at its best and most distinctive is the fair flower of a religion which sets God and man in their true relations, and corrects the false perspective which so often mars our vision of the eternal and unseen. Christian values can never be rightly understood except *sub specie eternitatis* ; they look beyond the immediate necessities of the hour to a standard and an ideal not that of this present world. The other-worldliness of Christian ethic may be,

and often is, abused and misunderstood, but rightly regarded and at its best it provides a sanction for conduct and a scale of values which are not to be matched in any other system. To walk by faith rather than by sight is, even in ethics, a safe and salutary rule. If it be kept in mind it will be possible to avoid the danger of the secularization of religion which too often accompanies its social and ethical interpretation. The Christian obligation to fellowship and social service should spiritualize life rather than secularize religion, and it will do so as long as attention is concentrated on Christian values and on the sacredness of personality. That men are precious in God's sight, and so worth saving even at the cost of sacrifice, are axioms that become battle-cries. Essential elements in the Christian character are the insight which enables men to see their fellows as God sees them, and the courage and high adventure which urge them to service without counting the cost. In this respect the example of Jesus Christ Himself counts for everything. Only those are truly His followers who are prepared to take up the cross and come after Him along the road of service and self-sacrifice. And, just as He endured for the joy that was set before Him, so is it with His followers. It is true that the hope of reward or fear of punishment in a future life no

longer appeals as once it did. That in itself may not be a bad thing. But that the decay of belief in immortality is at least partly responsible for the slackening in religious interest and zeal there can be no manner of doubt. In dealing with the Christian estimate of the individual, this is a factor which must not be lost sight of. God has set eternity in the hearts of men. They are built on a bigger scale than that of this present world, and until they take this into their calculations they cannot get a true perspective. The whole question of moral discipline, with its end, individual character, takes on a new aspect when viewed *sub specie eternitatis*. Christianity, with its spiritual valuation of man and his destiny, can alone supply the means whereby this high vantage-ground can be reached. In an age like the present, in which materialist and mechanistic views of life are predominant, and equipment seems to be of greater importance than character, it is imperative that the sense of spiritual values should not be lost. Our whole conception of ethics is being changed by a psychology which has no room for a psyche, and resolves man into a bundle of animal instincts. Behaviour is the all-important thing, and is more or less mechanically regulated. We are what our appetites make us. Over against all this we have to set the Christian conception of

man as a spritual being, a child of God with an eternal destiny, prone to evil but capable of the highest. He has a life to live and a function to fulfil among his fellows. The struggles and temptations of his present lot are the means, under God, by which character is developed and personality attained. So far from being always the victim of circumstances, he can, if he will, make himself master in his own house. From the Christian point of view he is at once an end and a means, a soul in the making and to be saved, and an agent in saving others and helping to set up the Kingdom of God upon the earth. In the stress and turmoil of these later years which have seen the shattering of so many illusions, and even ideals, nothing has happened to destroy or diminish the value of the Christian conception of man and his duties to God and his fellows. Amid all the changes that have taken place, human nature remains essentially the same. Sin and sorrow, love and happiness, are what they always have been. Forms alter, but the experience remains, and it is with the experience that we have to do. The Christian message has proved its power to regenerate life and re-create character. Restated in modern terms and re-adapted to modern needs, it is still 'the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.'

II

THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC AND THE FAMILY

II

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As we have already seen, the social implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ rest, not on any explicit pronouncements, so much as on the general spirit of His moral and spiritual teaching. It is true that He came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. His work was not to set forth a fresh code of legislation, but to bring out the inner significance and the real intention of the old system. In substituting the internal motive for the outward act as the criterion of morals He wrought a revolution, the real bearing of which has perhaps never been fully understood. Even in relation to the social conditions of His own day, many of His precepts must be regarded as practically inapplicable, though there was in them something more than a reference to a distant and Utopian Kingdom of Heaven. In the social and economic conditions of our modern world they would be quite impossible, if treated as definite commands, though they are of the utmost importance and value as inculcating a spirit. If ever we are to

succeed in presenting Christianity as a life rather than a creed, it will surely be by the rediscovery and translation into deeds of that ethical temper and spirit which animated the whole outlook and teaching of Jesus Christ. This, as we have seen, had its root and source in the new valuation put upon man, and his new relationship both to God and to his fellows.

The nearest and dearest of these relationships are those which centre in the family. In the course of the first three centuries of our era we see the teaching of the Master and His followers blossoming out into an ideal of the home and of family life, which is the finest flower of our religion. It is true that, in the earlier days of Christianity, family interests were always held subordinate to those of the Kingdom of God. The excesses of a half-pagan society put a premium on continence and celibacy both for men and women. Men might make themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven, and virginity became a virtue esteemed beyond all others. So at the call of the Kingdom a man might abandon all home ties and be justified. But all this in no way detracted from the sacredness of the family bond or from the imperative call of family obligations. Marriage was honourable in all, and practically indissoluble save by death. Sexual intercourse outside marriage was absolutely

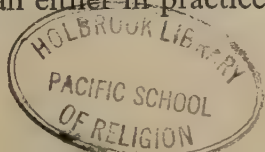
forbidden, and, inside marriage, only lawful when children were desired. Children, again, were an heritage of the Lord, with rights and a standing of their own. Obedience to parents was a sacred obligation, as also was the parents' duty to train children in the right way. Thus was produced in time a kind of family conscience which at its best was an abiding testimony to the power of Christianity, and, even at its worst, worked as leaven in the lump of pagan society, and as an antiseptic amid corruption.

But we are compelled to recognize the fact that a great deal of water has run under the bridge since the founding of the Christian Church. The conditions of modern life are quite different from those of the Graeco-Roman world, or the Middle Ages, or the time of the Reformation. The very principles whose application regulated and purified the life of those distant days work quite differently when applied under the conditions with which we are familiar. The liberty of the individual and the value attached to personality have done their work well, and have issued in an independence of conventions and in a degree of moral licence which have produced new dangers and difficulties. But the remedy lies, not as is so often urged, in prohibitions, repressions, and restrictions, but in a more radical and intelligent application

of fundamental Christian principles, chief of which is that new valuation of the individual which was among the most important and most original features of the teaching of Jesus. On the basis of this principle we may find a point of contact, if not a reconciliation, between Christian and natural ethics. Respect for personality is no artificial or manufactured thing. Attempts to re-organize social relations on the basis of it are likely to meet with more success than those based on other and less intimately human considerations.

In connexion with the problem of marriage the Christian doctrine of human values becomes of crucial importance. From the days of marriage by capture or purchase until now the tendency has been to regard the woman as the weaker and therefore inferior vessel, and within the marriage relation to prescribe to her duties rather than recognize her rights. In form, at any rate, the Church has acquiesced in this, and it is only recently that changes in the Church of England prayer-book have been made which point in the other direction. Society, too, still tacitly accepts a double standard of morals for men and women. Incontinence either within or outside the marriage bond is held to be worse in a woman than in a man, and is visited with far heavier penalties. Many good reasons for this can no doubt be

alleged, but the reason most commonly urged is a bad one, because it is based ultimately on the assumption of woman's inferiority. The whole matter of the relation of the sexes at once rises to a new level when it is conceded that a woman's personality is as precious and inviolable as that of a man, and this is the only view possible on the Christian premisses. Sexual relations without mutual affection and trust, whether within or outside marriage, constitute an outrage on personality and desecration of the holiest things. Ideally, and from the Christian point of view, marriage should be regarded as indissoluble save by death, and there are no doubt grave reasons against multiplying grounds for divorce. But it is generally agreed in Christian circles that open violation of the marriage vow on either side constitutes such a ground, and this concession involves a principle which needs to be applied all round. There are cases of physical, mental, or moral infirmity which make true marriage an impossibility. To compel two human beings to remain in the close association of wedlock when everything that makes true wedlock is wanting is an outrage on personality, and violates every Christian canon. It is no doubt very difficult to maintain Christian standards in a society which is far from Christian either in practice or sentiment.



But the attempt must be made, and, in the light of the Parable of the Leaven, is justified. In any case, it is far better for the Christian Church to take its stand on a broad human principle rather than to lay down hard and fast regulations, once perhaps made necessary by the hardness of men's hearts, but now resented as an imposition and a hardship, and productive of more evil than good. If Christians could but carry out their Master's teaching as to the sacredness of personality and the spiritual equality of men and women, they would find in it a clue which would guide them safely through the labyrinth of difficulties which beset the whole question of the relations of the sexes.

This is particularly true of that vexed question of birth-control which has of late become so prominent. The use of artificial means of preventing conception may sometimes be justifiable on medical grounds. But, apart from medical considerations, if we take the high line of the sacredness and inviolability of the person, it is difficult on Christian grounds to justify the use of marriage for sensual gratification alone, with the expectation of children entirely eliminated. That so many young people should enter on marriage with the deliberate intention of not having children is a social portent of the gravest kind. To treat

the sex relation as a mere means of selfish indulgence is a degradation of married love, and comes under the charge of reducing human personality to a means rather than regarding it as an end in itself. This does not necessarily mean that intercourse should never take place except when children are desired. Nature herself has provided otherwise. But it is a far cry from this to the regular use of mechanical means for preventing conception. The whole question is a very difficult one, and in the present divided state of opinion among medical men as to the physical effects of contraception it is unwise to dogmatize on the subject. This much, however, may be said. From the Christian point of view the best method of birth-control is surely self-control. Where true love is present in a marriage this is not so difficult as it may sometimes seem, and without it the physical side of marriage easily degenerates into mere animality. True love will seek to protect the wife against excessive child-bearing, to the injury of her health, but it will also recognize that large families are not necessarily an evil. There are cases in which, on hygienic grounds and possibly also on others, contraceptive measures may be justified. They cannot, therefore, be condemned outright ; but they do involve certain moral and even physical risks which are

not lightly to be undertaken, and there is always a better way available for those who have the strength and courage to accept it. The question is one which the Christian Church will certainly have to face sooner or later. Indeed, it has already become urgent, and the time for prudish reticence is long past. Birth-control clinics are springing up everywhere, and when carefully managed, and under medical guidance, are no doubt doing good work among the uninstructed. But it is quite impossible to confine to the married the knowledge thus imparted, and there is abundant evidence of the harm which the possession of such knowledge is doing among adolescent boys and girls. Contraceptive devices are openly advertised, and their sale is being actively pushed, and that by no means only among the married. In France the sale of them is now prohibited and it might be wise in this country to confine it to those who can produce a doctor's order. Meanwhile, the Churches can do much to help by inculcating self-control and keeping before the young a high standard of sexual purity. They can do much also to maintain the true ideal of marriage, and to create a public opinion on sex questions which shall be more healthy and more Christian than the average. This can be done without any lapse into Puritan intolerance or without interfering in any

way with the freer and saner relations between the sexes which modern manners have made possible. As long as they retain that respect for personality which is a fundamental Christian postulate they cannot go far wrong.

In the light of such Christian teaching we may begin to understand how necessary it is to lift this whole subject to a higher level than that of economics or eugenics. We shall do well to remember that 'science, when applied to the study of human beings, must of necessity deal only with their least vital characteristics, with those aspects of their nature which are constant, invariable, and mechanical, and therefore susceptible of the same kind of treatment as gases, liquids, and solids. And this circumstance explains, perhaps, why it is that people whose instincts are truly alive refuse to believe that anything very illuminating can ever be produced by the compilation of statistical tables and sociological memoirs. On the other hand, they respond to the appeals of religion and art. For they recognize, with a greater or smaller degree of clearness, that the concentration by the artist and mystic on the individual and personal elements in life constitutes a preoccupation with the ultimate causes of all external circumstances.'¹ There is a

¹ *The Learned Knife*, by L. Hyde, p. 75.

famous Latin proverb, 'Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret,' which may be roughly paraphrased, 'Nature will take her revenge on those who interfere with her.' Certainly such interference is a far more difficult and delicate thing than some enthusiastic experimenters seem to realize. It is impossible to treat human beings, even for their good, as though they were pieces on a chessboard or counters in a game. There is always an unknown quantity, the personal equation, which has to be reckoned with, and which has a way of overthrowing the most exact and elaborate calculations. Advocates of eugenics can make out a very good case for more scientific breeding, sterilization of the unfit, &c., but the facts are often against them. 'Beethoven was the son of a consumptive mother and a father who was a confirmed drunkard. Schubert was the son of a peasant father and a mother in domestic service. Michael Faraday was born over a stable, his father an invalid blacksmith and his mother a common drudge, and began his education by selling newspapers in the London streets.'¹ The whole question of heredity is most difficult and complicated, and in our present state of ignorance it is easy to do more harm than good by interference and attempts at regulation. Apart from

¹ Fosdick, *Adventurous Religion*, p. 36.

this, however, human relations do not easily lend themselves to mechanical treatment. Personality must be respected, and will assert its claims. The Christian method of training men and women in self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control, and, we may add, self-denial, will produce far better results than any legislation. As we have seen already, it is the duty of the Church to keep before its members a high ideal of love and marriage ; and, while acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining the Christian standards in a semi-pagan society, to lose no opportunity of enforcing them, both by precept and example. Above all, by inculcating in season and out of season the great doctrine of the sacredness of personality, it should work for the abolition of the double standard of sexual morals and the establishment of a far healthier sex attitude and relations both before and after marriage. That we should have abandoned the reticence, based generally on a false modesty, which characterized the Victorian attitude on sex matters, is all to the good. Men and women have a right to know the facts of the case before they enter on the solemn business of marriage. But the knowledge itself may be turned to evil uses as well as good. With knowledge needs to go some moral training and discipline of character which will ensure its being used in the

right way. It is not enough to tell men and women to be good, or to warn them against the evil consequences of misdoing. They need some positive sanction for that kind of moral action which involves a high degree of self-denial. This is only to be found in religion ; and in the Christian religion above all we have not only a high moral ideal, but the power, impulse, or sanction which makes it possible for weak flesh and blood to attain it.

Turning now to the wider aspect of the family, we have to deal with the nurture, discipline, and education of children from the Christian point of view. Here it is necessary to recognize at the outset that we live in a very different world of ideas from those which animated our forefathers in the not very distant past. There was a time when not only theology, but men's whole outlook upon life, was deeply coloured by the belief in original sin. Children were born in sin. Their destiny was fixed for them beforehand, and the utmost that could be hoped for them was that they might be snatched as brands from the burning. Though this terrible theory never quite overcame the impulses of natural human affection, it frequently led to much harsh treatment of children in their early years. Parents and others seem to have had some dim idea of driving out the Devil

and getting rid of the original taint by methods of severity. It is extraordinary how the theological obsession seems to have obliterated the memory of the attitude and example of Jesus Christ. His treatment of children is surely one of the loveliest things in His whole life. He loved them because they were lovable, and He saw in them the promise and potency not of evil, but of good. The more like men and women were to them the nearer were they to the Kingdom of Heaven. God is their Father ; they are made in His image, and so from the first are capable of the highest. And it is here, with this assumption, that Christian nurture begins. Even pagans could confess, ' *Maxima debetur puero reverentia.*' Much more, therefore, should the Christian treatment of children be governed by a high sense of their value in God's sight, and of the vast capabilities of development which are native to them. In drawing these out and directing them aright the life and discipline of the home are all-important. In modern discussions on education it is usual to try and delimit the respective spheres of the home, the Church, and the State. There can, however, be no question but that from the Christian point of view the influence of the home is here all-important. For the normal action and development of many of the instincts, close association

with other children in the free intimacy of home life is absolutely necessary. An only child, brought up mainly among its elders, is not only a pathetic figure, but is likely to become in many respects abnormal. In the home, parental guidance, affection, and discipline, while all-important, are really secondary to the rough and tumble of the playroom. Personality is best developed by contact with other persons, and the process cannot be begun too early. For Christians the end to be aimed at is the development of character and the growth of individuality. Education, therefore, must always be regarded, not merely as a matter of intellectual gymnastics, but of moral and spiritual achievement. Religion has a real part to play in it, and that not as one subject, a kind of extra, among others, but as supplying the background, atmosphere, and sanction through which alone the whole process becomes effective. For this the foundations can nowhere be so well laid as in the home and through family life. Even for school life the family background is all-important, and, without it, growing boys and girls are apt to miss the best that school can offer, and sometimes to be lost indeed. The values which home life tends to emphasize are just those which school may develop but can hardly originate. A child that has never experienced the discipline of parental

control, and whose herd instinct has not been cultivated in the intimate life of the nursery, is likely to have a bad time when thrown into the wider and more turbulent life of the school. Advances in educational method and technique will be very dearly bought if they lead in any degree to substituting the school for the home. There is ample evidence that the danger of this happening is very real. The tendency in all classes of the community is to send children away from home to school at a very early age, often just when they are most in need of that atmosphere and discipline which only the home can supply. It should be one of the tasks of the Christian Church to urge upon parents the paramount duty of realizing their responsibility for the moral and religious training of their children, and of laying well those foundations of character on which school and university may safely build. Work of this kind can seldom be safely delegated to those in charge of schools. Without the backing and the background of a true home life, school-teachers are greatly handicapped in the task of training character. As a rule they give themselves to it with magnificent devotion, and they deserve far more help and support than they often get from those who are chiefly concerned.

At the same time, it should be fully recognized

that the vast improvements in educational method and ideals which have taken place of late are all in the right direction. Children are no longer regarded or treated as adults in miniature. They have an individuality of their own, and can only be successfully dealt with as their personality is respected and understood. To this end the study of child psychology is proving most valuable, and teachers are being trained in educational theory and method in a way that should enable them to avoid most of the mistakes of the past. The danger to which they are most prone is a doctrinaire and academic treatment of the whole subject of child nurture. They are often at the mercy of a merely behaviourist psychology, with its corollary in a mechanistic interpretation of human nature and life. The only way to correct this, and to ensure to children that all-round training which will develop their moral and spiritual as well as their bodily and intellectual powers, is an education rooted and grounded in religion. For Christians this is, or should be, axiomatic ; but even they seldom succeed in living up to their principles in this regard.

It is of all things most unfortunate, to use no harsher term, that religious education should have been made a bone of contention among the Churches. They have tended to deal with it in

their own interests rather than in the interests of the children. Indeed, the controversy still goes on over the heads both of children and teachers, as though they were the last people to be considered. It is too often assumed that religious education consists in training children in Church tenets and dogmas which they cannot possibly understand, and which, even if they were understood, would contribute little or nothing to their moral and spiritual development. The whole subject needs to be taken clean out of the ecclesiastical atmosphere in which it is generally smothered. There is much truth in the familiar saying that religion cannot be taught, it must be caught. Example, influence, and atmosphere are here more powerful than precept, and for this reason the home rather than the Church or the Sunday school, in the first instance, is the place where religious training should be begun. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the home atmosphere in early life in commending the Christian faith to children. The lives of the parents are the first Bibles that they read, and what they read there they will carry with them to the end. A farmer in the Midlands had three sons, and used to wonder complainingly why they all went to sea. The reason was that in the farm kitchen the most conspicuous object was the

picture of a ship in full sail. The boys had been brought up with it, and it influenced their whole lives. If it be true that home life is decaying, that family prayer is being given up, and that the religious training of children is being handed over to the schools, then we have not far to look for an explanation of the religious indifference now so widespread. The Churches can never take the place of the home in training children in the faith, but they can and ought to teach young people the Bible and the fundamental truths of Christianity, and, by inspiring them with a deep sense of their responsibility, prepare them when they become parents to teach their children as they have themselves been taught. There is a Christian conception of childhood's values and of child nurture which stands out above all others, and constitutes a challenge both to parents and teachers. The solemn warning of Jesus to those who cause one of His little ones to stumble is not without its positive application. Any failure, on the part of those chiefly responsible, to give the children the fullest opportunity of developing their higher powers is to do them an irreparable injury. Among the most welcome signs of the times is the immense step forward in the development and organization of education. Schools and colleges continue to multiply, and yet can hardly

keep pace with the demand for them. The teaching profession was never so well equipped or so enthusiastic. It is held in greater esteem than once it was, and is more adequately rewarded, though not yet in accordance with its deserts. There is, however, very real danger lest too much stress should be laid on the merely utilitarian aspect of educational work and institutions. It is all to the good that boys and girls should receive the best possible training for their vocation, whatever that may be. But the end of education is something far higher and deeper than the merely mechanical equipment for a particular task. It should be an all-round preparation for life through the development of character and the due recognition of those moral and spiritual values on which character depends. Even the most materially minded and practical man of business is compelled to acknowledge the importance of these values. In engaging a subordinate he is not merely content to inquire as to his technical equipment for his job ; he wants also to know something as to what he calls his character. No man in his senses would think of engaging even an office-boy, however smart and competent, if he had evidence that he was a thief and a liar. Indeed, it is generally recognized that skill and cleverness apart from character are apt to render their possessor a danger to society.

Now, the Christian view of education puts the first things first, and is determined by that high valuation of human nature which, as we have seen, was an essential part of the teaching of Jesus Christ. As over against certain modern-world views based on a materialist philosophy and a purely behaviourist psychology, Christianity insists on the reality of spiritual values and on the fact that 'man doth not live by bread alone.' In the educational system, religion is no extra or optional subject, but must supply the atmosphere and direct the course of the whole process. It can only be successfully undertaken by those who are themselves convinced of its truth and importance, and who are able to deal with others on the basis of experiences which are real and vital to themselves. Only these are able to aim consistently at that development of character in which religion must always play a most important part. To this end religious training must be undertaken scientifically and systematically, and with due regard to its bearing on the general, moral, and mental development of the child. At present we know more about this subject than ever before, though the study of it is as yet only in its infancy. It is of the first importance that all those who have to do with children should have some training in this aspect of their work, and more facilities for

such training are greatly needed. The Christian Churches need to recognize their responsibility in this matter more clearly than they do. The work is one in which home, school, and Church must learn to co-operate if it is to be well done and if it is to contribute as it should do to the moral development of the race.

There are many features in our modern civilization which seem to witness to a low standard of family life and obligation, and to the need for a more vigorous application of Christian ideals and precepts. The very existence in a Christian country of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is in itself a portent. Those who read its reports, and are acquainted with the horrors they reveal, may well be excused some very pessimistic conclusions as to the state of family morals among certain classes of the community. It is no doubt easy to exaggerate the extent of this evil, but it exists and has to be reckoned with. Side by side with it may be noted an increasing tendency to regard children as an asset rather than a responsibility, and to hand over to the State or some outside authority such cares as properly belong to parents and to the home. Free education, with free medical treatment and free meals, may be a necessary and excellent thing, but it undoubtedly has the effect in some cases of

lessening parental responsibility and profoundly modifying family life. So, too, the early age at which children leave school, and the ease with which they can enter various blind-alley occupations, and so begin to contribute to the family exchequer, tends to break up family life and to create a wholly false relationship between such children and their elders. While it is no doubt very desirable to raise the school age and keep young children off the labour market, any movement in this direction is likely to be opposed unless it can be accompanied by some better system than at present in vogue for giving to boys and girls the kind of technical training which will lead to permanent employment. This is a question in which both education and industrial authorities are concerned, and it needs to be dealt with in such a way as to preserve parental responsibility on the one hand and on the other to enable children to develop as personalities and not as mere cogs in the commercial machine. The matter is one in which important economic considerations are involved, and must not be lost sight of. But it is also one of those cases in which the need to ethicize economics becomes obvious. We may well take to heart the warning of Sir Josiah Stamp as to the close relation between ethics and economics, as when he says, 'Many of you may

think that to assign as the greatest work of the Christian ethic the slow process of individual character-building by precept, prayer, and practice is timid, and even prosaic. But I firmly believe that only by a general raising of human sentiment to deeper spiritual quality, and to carry it over a wider field, can the factor of human motives and mutual trust be sufficiently changed to have an economic result. Long before it reaches that point it will have abundant fruits in individual character, and, even if its influence in economic betterment were negligible, it would still be the most worthy aim of human effort.’¹ From any Christian point of view the whole problem of training the young and fitting them to play their part in the body politic is both an ethical and an economic one, and the ethical element in it is paramount. Moral character is a prime consideration, and whatever tends to produce such character has a definite economic value. Here, too, religion comes in as the motive, sanction, or power in character-building. This process is best carried on in the home, and any action of the community in the matter should be as an auxiliary of, and not a substitute for, home life. The very word ‘home’ is a peculiarly Christian product. It means more than family. It is family raised to the *n*th power,

¹ *The Christian Ethic as an Economic Factor*, p. 85.

and spiritually envisaged and interpreted. But it has and needs a material environment by which it is inevitably and profoundly conditioned. It is almost a mockery to speak of home in connexion with slum dwellings and single-roomed tenements. Family life under such conditions is frankly impossible. No Christian can be content to leave families to grow up under conditions which put a premium on immorality and make true character-development difficult, if not impossible. Here again we are confronted with an economic problem, but it is a moral and spiritual problem as well. The 'housing' question is much more than an item in a political programme, and raises other problems than those of rent and wages. For tens of thousands of our people it has a very tragic significance, and for the children of the poor it is a matter of life and death. There is some danger lest in the complexities of our modern social order the broadly human factors should be overlooked. It is the business of Christian citizenship to see to it that this shall not happen, and to deal with all questions affecting the material welfare of our people in such a way as to make them minister to moral and spiritual progress.

III

THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC AND THE STATE

III

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WHEN Jesus Christ said to His disciples, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's,' He was building better than they knew or could understand. He drew clearly and sharply a distinction, the outlines of which had often been blurred, and He indicated the existence of two loyalties, both of which rightly claim obedience. Caesar—or, in other words, the State or secular power—has the right to make certain demands of men, and these it is their duty to respect. On the other hand, God, and the things of God, also claim their allegiance. In other words, religion also involves certain obligations which men are bound to observe. Stated thus, the position is quite simple, and no difficulty emerges until circumstances arise in which the two loyalties conflict. Such a division of loyalties is a very common feature in human life, and, it may be said, a very common cause of perplexity and strife. A man owes a duty to his family, and, let us say, to his partners in business.

Such loyalties need never conflict. A man may live his whole life and carry out to the full his obligations to both interests. Should a conflict arise, however, and the man be compelled to choose which interest he would serve first, he might be very hard put to it. He would have to be guided, as we say, by circumstances, and make his choice accordingly. But in the case of a choice between Caesar and God no such hesitation would be admissible. According to the teaching of Jesus, to do the will of God and to seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness is the prime consideration in all human action, and appeals to a loyalty before which all others must bow.

In the early days of Christianity, when the disciples of Jesus Christ were few in number and but loosely associated with one another, they found themselves confronted with a pagan world whose ordinances conflicted at many points with the demands of their new faith. When, therefore, the State required of them acts or observances which seemed to them to conflict with the will of God as they now understood it, they had no hesitation in refusing. They gladly suffered the consequences of their refusal, even unto death itself. Though this general position was maintained with some consistency, our records indicate a good deal of confusion, and even conflict, of

opinion. Christians looked to the Kingdom of God which supplied the atmosphere and regulated the conduct of their lives. Many of them expected a speedy Parousia and consummation of all things whose approach caused them to set by lightly the obligations of this present life. Many, too, had come out of Judaism and brought with them a bitter hatred of Imperial Rome. To many of them the State stood for something not merely non-Christian, but evil, idolatrous, and persecuting. Their newly won ideas of freedom, too, were sometimes made to justify a neglect of social obligations that was certainly not consistent with neighbourly love. Hence, perhaps, the insistence in some parts of the New Testament on the duty of obedience to the State. 'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.' 'For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour' (Rom. xiii.). Or again, 'Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man

for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well ' (1 Pet. ii.). This is pretty sweeping, and is obviously called forth by the antinomian tendencies of those who found the new wine of freedom too strong for them. At the same time there is no suggestion in the writings of St. Paul or others that Christians were to go beyond the command of Jesus to render to Caesar what is Caesar's. In the case of a direct conflict between Christian duty and the authority of the State there would have been no doubt in the mind of St. Paul or any other Christian as to the right line to take. As time went on, the antagonism of the secular power to Christianity became more pronounced, and on the part of Christians an attitude of entire aloofness, if not of actual disobedience, was counted to them for righteousness. In any event, ' We must obey God rather than men ' expressed a general principle which most Christians were glad to observe.

As the Church became more closely organized and more powerful, its relations with the State were gradually modified, and an alliance was formed which, while it gave to the Church a certain political influence and prestige, tended to diminish its spiritual authority. The mediaeval

Church was by no means only a religious institution. It assumed many of the aspects and functions of the State, and concerned itself quite as much with the material concerns of men as with their souls. It held a vast amount of landed property, and drew great sums in taxation. It administered law and justice, and engaged in diplomacy and even in military enterprises. It exercised over the minds and lives of men a domination which gradually became intolerable. It was this in the long run which led to its undoing. The State gradually took to itself certain of the functions and duties hitherto performed by the Church, and having secularized some of these, and abolished others, it claimed to exercise control over the Church in regard to what remained. The result in this country, at any rate, was the State establishment of the Church. The Church continued to live and do its work under State patronage and control. The occupant of the throne was the titular head of the Church, and, though there were never wanting those who boldly asserted the right of the Church to autonomy in spiritual things, the fact remained that, in the eye of the law, the Church was an appendage of the State. In this way, no doubt, the established Church gained a certain prestige, but it was at the price of its true liberty.

Ever since the time of the Reformation, however, there have been those who have resented the claims both of Church and State to dominate the religion of the individual man. When Luther pleaded in set terms for the liberty of the Christian man he laid the foundation for a re-interpretation of the relation of the individual both to Church and State. His plea was based on that Christian individualism which gave to every man the status of a child of God. When the Reformation came over to this country, the seed of liberty found a soil prepared for it. The new movement won its way, not merely because it provided an antidote to the corruptions and abuses of the existing Church, but because it appealed to the nascent individualism of the common people. Puritanism in its separatist form stood for the crown rights of Jesus Christ, and opposed to the death any attempt on the part of the State to exercise a jurisdiction over men's souls in spiritual things. It also stood for the liberty of the individual within the Church. Where two or three met together in the name of Christ, there was He in their midst, and where Christ was, there was the Church. Within the Church each member had equal rights and privileges, and the government of the Church under its great Head, Jesus Christ, lay in their hands. It is not too much to say that the beginnings of

democracy in this country are to be discerned in those little gatherings of early Nonconformists where men learned to think and speak for themselves on the great issues of Church and State, as well as on things eternal and unseen. The stern theology of John Calvin, with its doctrines of election and reprobation, at once suited their mood and intensified their sense of responsibility. It delivered them from all fear of man, and lifted them above all ambitions save the desire to do the will of God alone. The liberty which they sought and claimed was at once wider and deeper than that for which Luther had stood. Priestly domination and secular control in spiritual things were alike abhorrent to them. They believed that there could be no compulsion in things of the mind, and they asserted their right of private judgement in ways which seemed to many of their contemporaries to involve sheer religious anarchy. Yet they knew what they were doing, and through much storm and stress succeeded in vindicating for all time the spiritual independence both of the individual and of the Church. A long time was to elapse before this cardinal principle of the Christian faith, which Puritanism so nobly endorsed, should win anything like wide acceptance. But ever since those days it has never been without witnesses, and it is stronger to-day than ever.

The piecemeal disestablishment of the Church in these realms has destroyed for ever the illusion that either the material or spiritual welfare of the Church depends on connexion with the State, while the recent rejection of the Revised Prayer Book by the House of Commons has convinced the most Erastian that State control of the worship of the Church is an intolerable thing. It may be that we are a long way yet from any complete breach of the tie which binds the Anglican Church to the State. But there is now a clear distinction in men's minds between State recognition and State control of religion. Many are inclined to admit that for the sake of the State it may be a good thing that religion should be in some way officially recognized, but they are equally convinced that this must not involve anything of the nature of State patronage and control of Churches. The lesson of liberty has been well learnt, and is now in no danger of being forgotten. All Churches claim, and rightly claim, spiritual autonomy, and resent any interference from the secular power. One of the problems of the immediate future will be to consider how far it is possible to reconcile some form of State recognition with that spiritual independence which is as the breath of life to any living Church.

The assertion of this independence is all the

more necessary in modern times because the Christian Church is now confronted, not, as was once the case, with an arrogant and usurping political power, but with a secular civilization which constitutes a far more serious danger than any State. It is now very evident, says Professor Rufus Jones, 'that Christianity is confronted with a vast body of persons who exhibit rival interests, and who are influenced by the appeal of values quite different from those which are expressed in and through the Church. These persons are largely impervious to warnings concerning the dangers that threaten their souls in the next world. They are cold towards the whole content of what is known as eschatology—the world beyond death. If they are to be reached and moved and transformed, it must be through an interpretation of life which raises it to a new dynamic quality, which increases its intrinsic richness and which opens out within the man himself unsuspected interior dimensions of life.' There is, of course, nothing new here. From the beginning the Church has been confronted by the world, and has had to struggle against the aims, tendencies, and ideals of a purely secular life. The increasing complexity of modern civilization has done nothing to diminish this antagonism. Christian idealism is confronted by a

naturalistic view of the universe and a purely materialist conception of life all the more formidable because it is so elusive and vague. No doubt it has its good side. Even the most secular civilization has its humanitarian interests and social enthusiasms. Through improvement in outward conditions—war on disease and poverty and attention to the laws of eugenics—it can do much to add to the sum of human happiness. But much more than this is needed. Man, we must repeat, does not and cannot live by bread alone. There is that in human nature which the arts and goods of civilization can never satisfy, and which, if left unsatisfied, will render futile all efforts after happiness or true well-being. Hence the need for religion and for the Church. To quote Dr. Rufus Jones again, ‘ It must be admitted that the leanness and failure of modern civilization is in large measure due to the failure of the Church in the execution of its spiritual mission in the world. The “ secular ” tendencies have gone on inside as well as outside the Church. The line of division cannot be sharply drawn at the door of the Church. It is not only non-churchmen who live by material results, and who estimate and assess life in terms of pleasure gains. The watchmen on the walls have sometimes been asleep. The trumpet has frequently given an uncertain

sound. The spiritual vision of the cures of souls has not always been clear, and the moral leadership of the Church has not always been sound and virile.' It is therefore a clear duty, incumbent on all Christian people, not merely to oppose any encroachment of the world on the Church, but actually to seek to deliver men and women from the power of the world by the gospel which has been committed to them. From the standpoint of Christian ethics materialism is the enemy, and, whether in its theoretical or practical form, needs to be combated with all the spiritual resources that may be available. To the Christian who sees men and women as God sees them in Christ the task of delivering them from bondage to this present world is a paramount duty. To seek and to save the lost is as much his business as it was that of his Master. He does this, not merely by bettering their social conditions, or preparing them for a larger life beyond the grave, but by lifting them here and now to a higher moral and spiritual level, and giving them the freedom of that city whose builder and maker is God.

We turn now to another and more difficult aspect of our subject, viz. the relation of the individual to the group of which he is a member—society, Church, or State. Here we have to do in the first instance with the working of the herd

instinct, whereby the individual, for his own good and for the common good, subordinates himself and his desires to the group to which he belongs. In our complex modern civilization most people belong to more groups than one, and by the aims and interests of these groups their actions are very largely shaped and conditioned. 'Thus a man may have one complex relating to his family and kinsmen, another to the society of his fellow workers, a third to the political party to which he belongs, a fourth to his Church, and so on. Each of these modes of association carries its own specific traditions and activities, and to each corresponds in the mind of the individual member a complex with specific affects and conations. To suggestions arising from each of these partial herds the individual is susceptible, and his conduct is shaped very largely by the sum of suggestions arising from all of them.'¹ This is all true, but it is only one half of the truth. There is much to be said for the view that social progress has depended on the emergence of the individual from the crowd, and on his independence of, or even opposition to, the group mind. Without going so far as to endorse Carlyle's great-man theory of history, we may at least allow the right, and even the duty, of the individual to stand out

¹ Tansley, *The New Psychology*, p. 236.

from the mass, and seek to lead the common mind rather than be led by it. On any Christian view of human nature this right and duty must be regarded as paramount. Society cannot coerce a man's mind or force his conscience. There are times when the individual is compelled to assert himself and take action in the teeth of public opinion. Athanasius against the world, and Luther with his, 'Here stand I ; I can no other,' are but examples on a grand scale of a spirit that has made history and been at the back of all human progress. It will be disastrous if the complexity of modern society and the pressure of crowd contagion should ever be allowed to crush all such independence.

In religion this spirit works out as the right of private judgement, a right which is now generally conceded even in Churches which profess formally to deny it to their members. As has often been pointed out, the decision to enter an authoritative Church and to submit oneself to its guidance is in itself an exercise of this right, and to insist on retaining independence of judgement in spiritual things is neither unnatural nor improper. It may often seem a strange and overbold thing for one man to claim an insight into truth beyond that of his fellows. Yet had it not been that some men have had the courage of

their convictions, and dared to advance beyond the conventions of their time, no intellectual progress would have been possible. Most great discoveries have been made in the teeth of public opinion, and by men who ventured to follow their own reasoning or intuition against the popular view. In matters of religion, too, it is often by flouting the group mind, rather than by agreeing with it, that truth has been advanced. The substitution of orthodoxy for the love of truth has been disastrous to religious progress. Even to-day Churches are jealous and suspicious of leaders who break into 'fresh woods and pastures new.' There is a *vis inertiae* about dogmatic religion which makes men unwilling to face any change, and in defence of which they will still be ready to stone their prophets. But it remains true that God 'hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His word,' and readiness to welcome new light is the hall-mark of the true Christian. The unpardonable sin is to quench the Spirit of God and to refuse to use the minds He has given us, and the experience we have won, to reach a deeper understanding and clearer exposition of His truth.

The same must be said of the duty of the individual in matters of conscience and morals. While due deference may be paid to the common mind of the Church or of society or of the State,

none of these can be allowed authority to override conscience, or to insist on moral actions or a moral standard which the individual knows to be inadequate, or positively wrong. That men should be free thus to follow conscience is an axiom of most systems of morals. 'The question of liberty and autonomy takes us to the very heart of morality. Kant insists that morality is not mere expediency : the latter is relative, whereas the former is absolute : the moral ideal comes to us as a categorical imperative, with its own inherent and sufficient authority and its demand for an absolute though not unthinking obedience : the obedience must be real and therefore inward. The moral law is authoritative because it commends itself to our conscience, and awakens a response in us not as something alien, compelling us from without, but as an expression of our inmost and most real nature. Because it is our inmost nature, it therefore has a universal quality. In truly moral conduct we consciously will the law of our own ideal nature ; therefore it is our own law, and in obeying it we are realizing our own freedom. We exercise autonomy even in obeying the will of God, for in His will is our peace.'¹ As we have seen before, the Christian valuation of human nature enhances this sense of freedom and

¹ *Christ and Society*, Micklem and Morgan, p. 155.

responsibility. Its moral standard at once enlightens and quickens conscience, and makes more than ever impossible any coercion of it or imposition upon it from without. The devout Christian will always claim the right and accept the duty of following his conscientious convictions, even though they may involve him in open conflict with the standards of his Church, the customs of society, or the law of the land.

This is not, of course, to say that conscience, even in the case of Christians, is always an infallible guide. It stands to reason that even conscience may be educated, and needs educating. Christianity itself has done much to develop and direct the moral sense of mankind. The moral sense itself is the resultant of many forces, is subject to the influence of suggestion in various forms, and to that unconscious motivation which has always to be reckoned with in human action. Yet it remains true of conscience, as Bishop Butler says, that 'if it had might as it has right, power as it has manifest authority, it would rule the world.' However originated or motivated, there is about the categorical imperative of conscience an authority which men cannot escape or gainsay. A pertinent illustration of the difficulties sometimes involved in this subject is to be found in the question of the duty or

otherwise of Christians to engage in war. In spite of the Christian endorsement of the command, 'Thou shalt not kill,' many quite earnest Christians belong to the army, and others will join it on the occasion of a war, making heavy sacrifices to do so, and with an entirely clear conscience. On the other hand, there are also Christians who, even under conscription, will refuse to obey the call of their country, and will face imprisonment, and even death itself, rather than violate their consciences by taking part in war. Both of these parties alike appeal to their conscientious convictions as at once explaining and justifying their action. Each thinks that he and his sympathizers are right and that the others are wrong, and that they are mistaken in pleading conscience as an excuse for their action. To the outsider this excuse or reason seems as sincere and as justifiable in one case as in the other, especially as both alike are prepared to pay a pretty heavy price for their conscientiousness. It is impossible not to respect conscientious conviction expressed in such fashion, yet it is equally impossible to avoid the conclusion that conscience may sometimes be mistaken. During the Great War, tribunals were set up whose task it was, among other things, to discover how far those who pleaded conscience in their objection to serve were really acting on conscientious

grounds. That the tribunals were very ill-equipped for this part of their task goes without saying, but no one who attended their sessions when the cases of conscientious objectors were dealt with could help being struck by the immense difficulty of discovering the real motives by which men were actuated. There were some cases in which conscientious objection to war was the obvious ground of action ; others in which conscience was as obviously but a cloak for much meaner motives ; others, again, were on the border-line, and showed such a mixture of motives that any fair judgement was difficult, if not impossible. The whole situation pointed unmistakably to the need for moral education. Conscience, like every other human faculty, is the result of a long process of development, and in many people still needs both quickening and cleansing. Christianity brings with it a moral catharsis, and at its best raises conscience to a high degree of power and efficiency. In the matter of war, for example, there is no doubt that on any interpretation of Christian ethics it stands condemned, and this will go a long way to determine the attitude of any individual Christian in regard to it. If he takes part in it, it will probably only be at the risk of stifling his Christian conscience and following the lower line when a higher

is open to him. Christians, however, to-day as of old, are living in a pagan society, and will find it very difficult to impose upon it their standard of ethics. They need to address themselves to the task of moral education with more zeal than they have ever yet shown, and they will be the more likely to be successful if among themselves they maintain that standard at the highest possible level. Without in any sense advocating an impossible degree of Puritan strictness, Christians generally would probably agree that the modern Church has carried compromise a little too far, and that there is need for a bold re-assertion in practice of the Christian moral ideal.

On the broad question of the rights of conscience and of the moral independence of the individual there have been some remarkable developments in public opinion during recent years. On the one hand, the spiritual and ethical confusion caused by the war has driven many men and women to seek refuge in some form of authority which would deliver them from the necessity of thinking for themselves. This is quite as marked a feature of the modern attitude in art, literature, and politics as in religion. The more fantastic and imperative the fashion set, the greater is the number of those who follow it. Men and women follow the crowd because it serves the same kind

of purpose in their lives as protective colouring in the lives of birds and insects. The suppression of their individual tastes, feelings, and even convictions, seems but a small price to pay for 'safety first.' On the other hand, there are very many who take the opposite attitude to this. The right of Church or State to override the mind or will of the individual is questioned as never before. Erastianism in the Church and the Leviathan theory of the State are both at a discount, and will probably never again command any measure of assent. And, while it is generally agreed that a man may do what he will with his own, the one thing that he must not do with his conscience is to give it into the keeping of any other or others. In spite of many appearances to the contrary, the belief in and love of freedom is not dead. But it needs directing, educating, and developing; and this again is the task to which the Christian Churches of the future will need to bend all their energies. It is true, as we have already reiterated, that Christianity is far more than a moral system. It is not content simply to say to men, 'This is the way; walk ye in it.' It has the marked advantage over other religions in being able also to supply the power to do and to become. But it was not for nothing that in its earliest days the Christian religion was known as 'The Way.' It

did set before men a moral ideal that was worth pursuing for its own sake, and it did instruct them in its meaning and in the methods of attaining it. When Gibbon instanced the pure and austere lives of the early Christians as one of the causes of the spread of the new religion he was nearer the truth than he perhaps realized. Whatever we may think of his other alleged causes, this one was certainly effective, and if the Christian Church is to do in and for this present age what it did in the first age, it will be by the same means. The work was done in those days, not by any large-scale application of Christian principles to the needs and problems of the day, but by the production of Christian men and women whose character and influence served to leaven the whole lump of society.

Here, then, is the practical conclusion of the whole matter. The true solution of our social and political problems depends ultimately on the character and disposition of the individuals of whom society is made up. The confessed aim both of Christian ethics and of the Christian gospel is to reform the individual, and through him to change the face of society. But the task is by no means so easy as it is often made to appear. It is not enough simply to say, 'Change men and they will change society.' The reformer

has to reckon, not only with the lower impulses of human nature—with the natural man, as he is called—but with a closely knit social system organized on a materialist basis in which economic considerations are paramount. Again, it is easy to say, ‘Ethicize your economics,’ but the question as to how it is to be done still waits an answer. Christians generally have a rather pathetic confidence in the application of Christian principles as a universal panacea for human ills. They have some justification for their belief. But it will not come within the range of practical politics till they are able to answer such questions as how, where, when, and by whom? There is need for Christian statesmanship as well as for Christian idealism. The Churches must play their part here. They need to be reminded that more is required of them than passing pious resolutions in their assemblies on crying social evils. Such resolutions accomplish nothing save a certain salving of uneasy consciences and ‘a folding of the hands in sleep.’ Reform, like charity, must begin at home, and the Churches need first to set their own houses in order by showing the power and beauty of the Christian ethic in charity and unity among themselves, and in producing lives of infectious goodness. They can do much in the way of saving human wreckage and inspiring

men and women to the service of their kind. But they must do more. Much of the disrepute in which they are held to-day is due to their apparent impotence to live up to, or put into practice, the principles which they profess. They need to give themselves whole-heartedly to the kind of work done in recent conferences on Christian politics, economics, and citizenship. COPEC was indeed a step in the right direction, but only a step. Its work, spirit, and outlook must be shared by all the Churches, and far more self-sacrificing effort must be made to put both its ideals and its methods into practice. The Churches have at their disposal vast resources and any amount of goodwill, but they are hindered from action by their lack of unity, their self-centredness, and their innate conservatism. If they could but cast all this aside, and address themselves unitedly and intelligently to their great task of saving the world, there would be more relevance in their oft-repeated prayer, 'Thy Kingdom come.' As Dr. H. A. Mess says in his remarkable survey of industrial Tyneside, 'It is common for those who care about organized religion to say that what is most needed at the present time is a great spiritual revival. Doubtless we need a spiritual revival. But to the writer of this report it seems that we need at least as much

an overhauling of the machinery of the Churches. We waste such spiritual power as is given to us. The Churches generate more steam than they use effectively, and there is even now a sufficiency of men, of money, of enthusiasm, and of spiritual energy to accomplish a great deal if it were directed rightly and used wisely. "We have need to cry to the strong for strength," said the pilgrims in Bunyan's allegory. "Aye, and you will need to use it when you have it, too," was the reply. The Churches are not using their resources well. There are many signs of improvement in this respect, but there is still a long way to go.'¹

¹ *Industrial Tyneside*, p. 140.

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